

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor Peter Strong (Chair)
County Councillor Martyn Groucutt (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Rachel Buckler, Laura Wright, Tony Kear, Catrin Maby, Jan Butler, Ian Chandler, Sara Burch, Alistair Neill, Su McConnel, Mary Ann Brocklesby, Fay Bromfield, Jane Lucas, Emma Bryn, Meirion Howells, Paul Griffiths, Jackie Strong, Rachel Garrick, Maria Stevens, Steven Garratt, Angela Sandles, Ben Callard, John Crook, Tomos Davies, Dale Rooke, Jayne McKenna, Jill Bond, Louise Brown, Lisa Dymock, Tony Easson, Christopher Edwards, Simon Howarth, Richard John, David Jones, Penny Jones, Malcolm Lane, Phil Murphy, M. Newell, Paul Pavia, Maureen Powell, Frances Taylor, Tudor Thomas, Armand Watts and Ann Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Jonathan Davies	Head of Finance/Section 151
Paul Matthews	Chief Executive
Peter Davies	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Matthew Gatehouse	Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
James Williams	Chief Officer Law & Governance
Geraint Edwards	Head of Litigation and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Deb Hill-Howells	Chief Officer Infrastructure
Craig O'Connor	Chief Officer, Place and Community Well-being

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor Sue Riley

1. Declarations of interest

County Councillor Peter Strong declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as chair of the Friends of Calicott Library, in relation to item 7 of the agenda.

2. Chair's Announcement

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Noted.

The Chair congratulated pupils from Monmouth Haberdashers and Monmouth Comprehensive Schools who spoke at the COP30 conference and have been invited to the House of Commons to meet and present their work on deforestation to the Minister for Climate.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd January 2026

[Click here to watch the meeting](#)

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2026 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Reports to Council:

5. Publication of Pay Policy Statement

[Click here to watch the meeting](#)

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report for Council to approve the publication of Monmouthshire County Council's Pay Policy, in compliance with the Localism Act.

Council resolved to accept the recommendation to approve the Pay Policy for the year 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027.

6. Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 - 2028

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The Cabinet Member for Social Care Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services presented the Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2025-2028 including performance against the previous Corporate Parenting strategy 2022 - 2025 and an updated Action Plan for 2025 – 2028.

Council resolved to accept the recommendation that Council endorses the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan for 2025-2028.

7. Council Tax Resolution and Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2026/27

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The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the Council Tax Resolution and Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2026/27. Council is bound by Statute to specific timescales for Council Tax setting and is also required to make certain defined resolutions. The recommendations that form a major part of this report are designed to comply with the format of those Statutory Provisions. The recommended resolutions also draw together the Council Tax implications of precepts proposed by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent and Town and Community Councils, thereby enabling the County Council to establish its headline Council Tax levels at the various property bands within each Town or Community area.

Upon being put a recorded vote, and the Chair having the deciding vote, Council resolved to accept the recommendations as set out in the report [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for County Council, 05/03/2026 14:00](#).

For 22

Against 22

Abstain 1

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

Monmouthshire County Council Council Tax Resolution and Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2026/27

NAME	For	Against	Abstain
Councillor J BOND	x		
Councillor M A BROCKLESBY	x		
Councillor F BROMFIELD		x	
Councillor L BROWN		x	
Councillor E BRYN			x
Councillor R BUCKLER		x	
Councillor S BURCH	x		
Councillor J BUTLER		x	
Councillor B CALLARD	x		
Councillor I CHANDLER	x		
Councillor J CROOK	x		
Councillor T DAVIES		x	
Councillor L DYMOCK		x	
Councillor A EASSON	x		
Councillor C EDWARDS		x	
Councillor S GARRATT	x		
Councillor R GARRICK	x		
Councillor P GRIFFITHS	x		
Councillor M GROUCUTT	x		
Councillor S.G.M. Howarth		x	
Councillor M HOWELLS	x		
Councillor R JOHN		x	
Councillor D. W. H. Jones		x	
Councillor P. Jones		x	
Councillor T KEAR		x	
Councillor M LANE		x	
Councillor J LUCAS		x	
Councillor C MABY	x		
Councillor S MCCONNEL	x		
Councillor J MCKENNA		x	
Councillor P MURPHY		x	
Councillor A NEILL		x	
Councillor M. NEWELL		x	
Councillor P PAVIA		x	
Councillor M POWELL		x	
Councillor S RILEY			
Councillor D ROOKE	x		
Councillor A SANDLES	x		
Councillor M STEVENS	x		
Councillor J STRONG	x		
Councillor P STRONG	x		
Councillor F TAYLOR		x	
Councillor T THOMAS	x		
Councillor A WATTS	x		
Councillor A WEBB		x	
Councillor L WRIGHT	x		

8. Capital Strategy and 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report for Council to approve the 2026/27 Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy.

Upon being put to a recorded vote Council resolved to accept the recommendations:

For 25

Against 20

That Council approves the Capital strategy for 2026/27 as found at Appendix 1.

That Council approves the Treasury management strategy for 2026/27 as found at Appendix 2, including the: • 2026/27 Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement • 2026/27 Investment & Borrowing Strategies

That Council agrees that Governance & Audit Committee should continue to review the Council's treasury activities for 2026/27 on behalf of the Council by receiving and considering quarterly treasury update reports and a year-end report.

Monmouthshire County Council Council Tax Resolution and Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2026/27



NAME	For	Against	Abstain
Councillor J BOND	x		
Councillor M A BROCKLESBY	x		
Councillor F BROMFIELD		x	
Councillor L BROWN		x	
Councillor E BRYN	x		
Councillor R BUCKLER		x	
Councillor S BURCH	x		
Councillor J BUTLER		x	
Councillor B CALLARD	x		
Councillor I CHANDLER	x		
Councillor J CROOK	x		
Councillor T DAVIES		x	
Councillor L DYMOCK		x	
Councillor A EASSON	x		
Councillor C EDWARDS		x	
Councillor S GARRATT	x		
Councillor R GARRICK	x		
Councillor P GRIFFITHS	x		
Councillor M GROUCUTT	x		
Councillor S.G.M. Howarth		x	

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

Councillor Name			
Councillor M HOWELLS	x		
Councillor R JOHN		x	
Councillor D. W. H. Jones	x		
Councillor P. Jones		x	
Councillor T KEAR		x	
Councillor M LANE		x	
Councillor J LUCAS		x	
Councillor C MABY	x		
Councillor S MCCONNEL	x		
Councillor J MCKENNA		x	
Councillor P MURPHY		x	
Councillor A NEILL		x	
Councillor M. NEWELL		x	
Councillor P PAVIA		x	
Councillor M POWELL		x	
Councillor S RILEY			
Councillor D ROOKE	x		
Councillor A SANDLES	x		
Councillor M STEVENS	x		
Councillor J STRONG	x		
Councillor P STRONG	x		
Councillor F TAYLOR	x		
Councillor T THOMAS	x		
Councillor A WATTS	x		
Councillor A WEBB		x	
Councillor L WRIGHT	x		

9. Motions to Council:

10. Submitted by County Councillor Frances Taylor

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That this Council join with me, in congratulating Magor Action Group on Rail on the confirmation that Magor & Undy Walkway Station will be built first, with construction currently planned for 2029; for their unwavering commitment, passion and persistence over 14 years in their campaign for a Walkway station to serve Magor with Undy. This is their Victory.

Additionally, that this council formally lobby Transport for Wales and Network Rail for Magor & Undy Walkway station to be known as such, and for construction to commence now in line with the original Magor Action Group on Rail proposals in respect of design/layout and connection to the Hub.

Furthermore, that this council commits to the urgent work required to develop appropriate traffic management plans to support the station's success and ensure Magor with Undy retains its unique sense of place.

Seconded by County Councillor Simon Howarth.

Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.

11. Submitted by County Councillor Tony Kear

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

This Council:

Notes the growing frustration of residents across Monmouthshire at the deteriorating state of our roads and the persistence of potholes.

Recognises the financial strain placed on families and businesses through vehicle damage and unsafe road conditions.

Recognises the ongoing decline in the condition of the county's roads and the authority's continued failure to effectively address hazardous and recurring potholes.

Considers that the administration's short-term practice of repeatedly patching and re-patching potholes delivers poor value for money and does not provide a sustainable solution

Calls for a revised proactive, preventative and more sustainable approach to road repairs

Resolves to commission an urgent and transparent review of alternative methods of road repairs including a full cost analysis.

Requests that the administration brings forward a clear action plan within six months with proposals to repair the county's highways in a more sustainable and cost-effective way.

Calls for the publication of clear and transparent performance data on highways maintenance spending and outcomes.

Seconded by County Councillor Lisa Dymock.

Upon being put to a vote the motion was carried.

12. Member Questions:

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13. From County Councillor Rachel Buckler to County Councillor Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources

Following three consecutive years of substantial council tax increases, will the Cabinet Member state the total annual cost of operating County Hall, its current directorate-level utilisation and occupancy levels, and identify which departments have the lowest occupancy of County Hall?

The Cabinet Member responded that the annual operating cost of County Hall is approximately £200,000, made up of around £86,000 for electricity, gas, and water, and £124,000 in business rates. He explained that it is difficult to determine precise utilisation levels by directorate due to the flexible working environment. Most workspaces are shared by staff across a range of council services. However, there has been a significant increase in average attendance at County Hall over the last six months, reflecting the success of the flexible operating model and the prioritisation of drop-in and co-working spaces.

Recent additions to the site include SRS (Shared Resource Service) and EAS, which occupy space in J Block and generate income that helps offset running costs. He also noted that MCC has approximately 4,500 employees, many of whom work in frontline roles such as teaching or social care and would not be expected to work from County Hall. In addition to being a

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

workspace, County Hall also serves as a civic venue, hosting events such as weddings and citizenship ceremonies.

As a supplementary Councillor Buckler stated that residents have raised concerns about occupancy, and that it would be useful for them to see clearer occupancy data so they can understand whether this major asset is being used effectively. Could more detailed information, including an annual cost breakdown, be provided?

The Cabinet Member responded value for money is important and that County Hall generates over £100,000 in income through lettings. They agreed to seek the additional data requested. The point was reiterated that occupancy levels do not necessarily reflect productivity across directorates, as many staff—such as teachers and social workers—are not expected to be based in County Hall.

14. From County Councillor Louise Brown to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

A few years ago, the Council resurfaced the A48 from Parkwall roundabout to the Mathern junction and repainted the double white central hazard lines. When does the Council expect to resurface the rest of the A48 road from Mathern junction to the High Beech roundabout?

The Cabinet Member explained that the condition of this section of the A48 has been reviewed as part of the Highways Carriageway Maintenance Programme, following the countywide highway condition survey. The stretch of road between the junction for Mathern and the High Beech Roundabout has not been identified as a priority for resurfacing in the coming year. It is likely to be included in the programme in subsequent years, but no precise date can be given at this time. Even with additional budget allocations, the council must prioritise maintenance across the 1,600 km road network. As context, Powys maintains a 5,000 km network and recently reported a £180 million backlog.

As a supplementary Councillor Brown referred to the adjacent section resurfaced six years ago and asked if the Cabinet Member agreed that installing a new crossing (subject to consultation results) over a deteriorating surface is not sensible? When exactly will the resurfacing take place, given recurring cracks and potholes on this busy A-road?

The Cabinet member responded that a precise resurfacing date could not be provided at present. The Member agreed that installing a crossing on a surface imminently due for resurfacing would not be sensible, but further information is required about the specific location. The Cabinet Member suggested arranging a three-way email discussion with Operations Management to review the details.

15. From County Councillor Lisa Dymock to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

Could the Cabinet Member for Highways please provide an update on the timetable for resurfacing the remaining section of Crick Road to the B4245?

The Cabinet Member explained that the condition of this section of Crick Road is currently being re-inspected. It had been agreed for inclusion in the Small Schemes Programme, and most of this year's programme has been delivered. However, winter storms required resources to be diverted to urgent works, and locations affected by flooding across the north of the county from Abergavenny to Monmouth town centre.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

As a result, the resurfacing of Crick Road has been delayed. A precise timescale cannot currently be given, but the intention had been to complete it this year before the disruptions occurred. Updates will continue to be shared.

As a supplementary Councillor Dymock asked if the Cabinet Member believed it to be acceptable for residents to continue using a road in such poor condition?

The Cabinet Member declined to add further comment.

16. From County Councillor Christopher Edwards to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education

Can the Cabinet Member for Education inform council of progress made to the future plans for Chepstow School and the Chepstow cluster of schools since holding a meeting with Chepstow councillors in July last year?

The Cabinet Member for Education explained that the first academic term had been exceptionally busy due to preparations for the Estyn inspection, but reassured members that Chepstow remains a key priority within the Welsh Government's school investment programme.

Officers are working closely with Welsh Government colleagues to determine timelines and expectations for business cases beyond the strategic outline stage.

She also intends to meet with the headteachers in the Chepstow cluster and representatives from Chepstow Town Council to gather local views, as had recently been done in Monmouth. However, she noted that ambitions for Chepstow must be balanced against financial pressures and increasing construction costs.

As a supplementary Councillor Edwards asked "*What progress do you hope to achieve before July? And what do you hope to achieve for the Chepstow cluster by May 2027?*"

The Cabinet Member stated that, now the Abergavenny project is concluding, the Council can turn its attention to Chepstow as a priority. She committed to writing with detailed progress plans covering the remainder of the academic year and through to May 2027 and said she would be happy to share this information with all councillors.

17. From County Councillor Christopher Edwards to County Councillor Angela Sandles, Cabinet Member Equalities and Engagement

Can the cabinet member explain why Monmouthshire residents and swimming clubs in the South of the county (Chepstow & Caldicot) are being treated unfairly with regard to pool hire rates being the same for all Monmouthshire swimming pools when their pools are 5m shorter in length.

The Cabinet Member explained that the Council uses a corporate framework for fees and charges across all leisure centres, reviewed annually as part of the budget process. Although pools vary in size and facilities differ slightly between sites, the Council heavily subsidises leisure services to ensure affordability for all residents and clubs. She noted that while fees increase annually, these rises remain significantly lower than the increasing costs of running the centres and delivering their programmes. The Council continues to work closely with local clubs to support their long-term sustainability.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

As a supplementary Councillor Edwards asked “*Do you agree this is unfair, since residents pay the same but get smaller pools? Should charges be reviewed so all residents are treated equally?*”

She responded that these issues had already been explored in detail through extensive correspondence and engagement. The Council has worked closely with Chepstow Swimming Club to identify suitable packages that keep costs manageable, and she offered to provide additional detail if required.

18. County Councillor Martin Newell to County Councillor Catrin Maby, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment

Please could you provide an update my residents in Monmouth regarding the progress being made and when they can expect to see the Section 19 report in relation to the floods in November 2025.

Cllr Newell withdrew the question as it had been answered and instead asked: “*When we receive the Section 19 report, do you agree we should have a public meeting to discuss it and next steps?*”

The Cabinet Member welcomed the update that Cllr Newell had already received information from officers regarding the Section 19 report. She agreed that the way the report is communicated will be important, given its technical nature, and noted that a public-facing summary is standard practice. She explained that this year’s report will cover the Monnow catchment as a whole—rather than individual communities—because the flooding affected several areas simultaneously and the threshold of 20 properties triggers a combined report. She also outlined recent improvements in communication through the “Let’s Talk” platform and shared positive news about funding successes: a substantial Welsh Government grant for natural flood management in the Monnow and Trothy catchments, which will help the small flood team expand capacity for important resilience work.

19. From County Councillor Richard John to County Councillor Ben Callard, Cabinet Member for Resources

Could the cabinet member provide an update on the council's investment portfolio?

The Cabinet Member reported that the Council’s investment properties are currently predicting a £93,000 overspend due to unbudgeted holding and operating costs associated with vacant units, including electricity, service charges, and business rates. Some of this overspend is being offset by staff vacancies and improved performance at Newport Leisure Park. The Council remains confident that performance across the commercial portfolio will improve, supported by active efforts to reduce voids and negotiate favourable lease terms. A fuller update is scheduled for consideration at the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee meeting on 21 April.

As a supplementary Councillor John asked “*Businesses at Castle Gate Business Park received an 89% rent rise. Will you rescind these letters and stop forcing businesses out?*”

In response the Cabinet Member explained that the figure was not directly comparable because the increased amount includes items not included in the original rate. He added that the affected tenant had been benefiting from an introductory incentive rate intended to support start-up businesses—an approach the Council uses strategically to boost local enterprise and fill commercial spaces.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Thursday, 5th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm

20. From County Councillor Richard John to County Councillor Laura Wright, Cabinet Member for Education

Would the Cabinet Member explain what steps the council is taking to deescalate the dispute with the National Education Union to bring strike action at King Henry VIII 3-19 School to an end?

The Cabinet Member emphasised that everyone shares the priority of ensuring pupils at King Henry VIII School have a stable learning environment and deeply regretted that NEU members felt industrial action was necessary. She highlighted the important role of teachers and trade unions, and the value of dialogue in resolving workplace issues. The school is facing a significant budget deficit, a matter previously discussed in Council. The Council has been working with the school leadership and governing body to develop a sustainable deficit recovery plan, supported by an independent external review of staffing and curriculum structures. An eight-year recovery period has been agreed to give the school flexibility to implement necessary changes. While staffing changes are part of this process, she stressed that the formal consultation with staff must be allowed to run its course. Officers remain in close contact with both the school and the NEU with the aim of de-escalating the situation and reaching a resolution as soon as possible.

As a supplementary Councillor John asked how vulnerable pupils were being supported and whether other schools may face similar industrial action.

The Cabinet Member agreed that vulnerable pupils, particularly those with difficult home lives, require consistent support and that the disruption is especially challenging for them. She stated that she has no indication at present that similar industrial action is being considered at other schools, though she cannot know what unions may be planning internally. Negotiations are active but must remain confidential. She thanked the councillor for raising the concerns.

The meeting ended at 18:25pm